

## International Day for Conservation of Mangroves commemorated

**Kannur, Kerala:** The mangrove conservation project, referred to as 'Kannur Kandal project', initiated by Apollo Tyres, in partnership with Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), commemorated the UNESCO-mandated international day for conservation of mangroves at Kannur, Kerala. **Honourable Mayor of Kannur Municipality, Ms E P Latha** was the Chief Guest at this half-day event, which was attended by senior Govt and Forest officials, representatives of Apollo Tyres and WTI, Community Members and Academia.

The Kannur Kandal project aims at ensuring survival of the existing mangroves and increase acreage of such habitats across Kannur, potentially making it a prototype for other coastal districts of Kerala and a model for rest of the country. The students of Payyanur College in Kerala, presented a skit on 'Mangroves – Our Friends'.

The project is based in Kunhimangalam village, which is one of the largest mangrove villages of Kerala, and has established a Mangrove Interpretation Centre, located in the natural ecosystem, for mangrove-based research and education, and the promotion of mangrove restoration through community and government participation. A mangrove nursery has been established and community-based initiatives launched to enhance public awareness and reduce threats to mangroves. Special efforts are being made to generate scientific interest about mangroves among the youth. In the last fiscal, the project has been able to reach out to over 10,000 stakeholders and has developed a nursery with 3,000 saplings, which is being used for mangrove restoration.

Commenting on the initiative, **Satish Sharma, President, Asia Pacific, Middle East & Africa (APMEA), Apollo Tyres Ltd**, said "Environment is a key stakeholder for our organisation, and its conservation is integral to us. This project on Mangrove Conservation serves the critical need for raising awareness on protection of this fragile ecosystem that is essential for existence of coastal landscapes."

**Vivek Menon, ED and CEO, Wildlife Trust of India (WTI)** said "WTI turns 20 this year and we are extremely proud of our conservation action on ground. In our vision of a secure natural heritage of India, we have not lost sight of biodiversity rich eco-systems such as mangroves hitherto ignored by most. The Kannur Kandal project supported by Apollo Tyres is a shining example of securing key habitats and we hope that in the future we can extend this to all of Kerala's mangroves".

Mangrove forests are unique ecosystems, extremely rich in biodiversity, growing along inter-tidal coastal habitats such as shorelines, estuaries and backwaters. They are both refuges and nurseries for a large variety of threatened terrestrial and aquatic species, and an important source of fodder, medicines and firewood for people living in coastal communities. They also act as barriers against cyclones and tsunamis (evidenced in their important role in reducing the impact of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami), prevent coastal erosion, and maintain inland water quality by preventing sea water intrusion; however current estimates indicate that up to 67% of mangroves have been lost globally to date.

Mangrove area in Kerala has reduced drastically over the years. Kannur has 6 sq km of mangroves, i.e. around 67% of Kerala's total mangrove forest cover.

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